

# Asia's first chest pain specialist clinic wins award

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**Pilot has cut waiting time for diagnosis, halved hospital visits and reduced test costs by 20%**

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**Wong Shiying**

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Asia's first chest pain specialist clinic at Ng Teng Fong General Hospital has clinched an excellence award, for improving patient experience,

at the Asian Hospital Management Awards this year.

A pilot scheme since April last year, the rapid access chest pain clinic allows those experiencing intermittent discomfort in their chest to get it checked quickly by a heart specialist – within 24 hours

of referral – and receive one-stop evaluation and diagnosis.

So far, the clinic has reduced the waiting time to get a diagnosis from under two months to a day, lowered the number of hospital visits by half and reduced the cost of medical tests by 20 per cent.

Led by Dr Pipin Kojodjojo, who is also senior consultant at the National University Heart Centre, Singapore's Department of Cardiology, the clinic has, to date, evalu-

ated more than 500 patients with new onset chest pain.

However, Dr Pipin said, people who are experiencing persistent and severe chest pain should call an ambulance for immediate treatment as they could be having a heart attack.

“But they are the minority of patients. Most people experience chest pain that comes and goes and it doesn't seem very serious, but they want to find out what's

wrong,” he said at a media briefing yesterday.

“For these patients, they can visit the chest pain clinic instead of the emergency department which helps to reduce congestion there.”

To get an appointment at the chest pain clinic, a referral letter from either Jurong Polyclinic or Pioneer Polyclinic is needed.

Within 24 working hours of the referral, a heart specialist from the chest pain clinic will see the patient, run tests and diagnose him on the same day. This was not possible before, unless the patient was sent to the emergency department.

Dr Pipin said getting a hospital diagnosis for chest pain through a polyclinic referral can take an average of four weeks and require several trips to the hospital.

“Allowing consultation and testing to be completed within a single hospital visit improves patient con-

venience. It also minimises the risk of transmission with the current pandemic,” he added.

Mr Arthur Chong is one of the 500 patients who have been treated at the chest pain clinic.

The 49-year-old engineer was diagnosed with blockages in his arteries and treated with minor surgery within five days of experiencing sharp pains in his chest.

He received a referral from Pioneer Polyclinic on May 19 and was diagnosed at the chest pain clinic two days later.

“When my friends hear about my experience, they ask if I'm a VIP and I say no... I went to a polyclinic first,” he said.

Four more polyclinics – Queenstown, Clementi, Bukit Batok and Choa Chu Kang – will be collaborating with the chest pain clinic by the end of next year.

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